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THE MINISTER AND PARISH:

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ORDINATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE MEMBERS OF THE

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY IN WORCESTER,

March 28, 1852.

BY ALONZO HILL.

PRINTED FOR THE USE OF THE SOCIETY.

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"Our bishopricks are a great and weighty care; and, in a spiritual sense, our dominion is founded in grace, and our rule is in the hearts of the people, and our strengths are the powers of the Holy Ghost, and the weapons of our warfare are spiritual; and the eye of God watches over us curiously, to see if we watch over our flocks by day and by night. And though the primitive church, when they deposed a bishop from his office, ever concealed his crimes, and made no record of it, yet remember this, that God does and will call us to a strict and severe account." — JEREMY TAYLOR.

BOSTON:

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DISCOURSE.

ACTS, XXVI. 22.

HAVING, THEREFORE, OBTAINED HELP OF GOD, I CONTINUE UNTO THIS DAY, WITNESSING BOTH TO SMALL AND GREAT.

On Wednesday, March 28, 1827, I was ordained pastor of this church. It is just twenty-five years this day, since, after seven weeks' probation, I first stood in your pulpit as your settled minister. Whatever interest the fact may awaken in the minds of others, to me the anniversary comes crowded with associations and recollections deeply affecting. The scene is all before me now in its minute particulars; the aspects of the sky return, the actors again arrange themselves around, and the emotions of the hour revive afresh. I well remember it: it was a spring morning; the mists hung heavily, and the rains fell; but, before noon, the sun broke through the cloud, harbinger of our hope, when, in yonder edifice, the first meeting-house of this society, now so happily devoted to the education of your children, I ap-

proached your altar, and took upon me my ordination-vows. The forms of fathers and brethren, loved and venerable, who took part in the consecration-service, rise up before me distinctly, as if they were here but yesterday. I listen again to the eloquent and earnest tones of Brazer, who preached the sermon; I see again the hands of Kirkland and Harris and Allen, lifted in prayer for our mutual guidance; I hear again the solemn charge of Bancroft; and the impressive tones of Thayer, as he addressed you on your duties, still ring in my ears. How vivid, after a quarter of a century, the forms of these men! how fresh and familiar their tones! and yet not one of them survives this day to witness the answer of their prayers, and receive from me an account of my stewardship. Nor these alone, but other forms, rise up, and fill and crowd the mental vision. You yourselves, my early and long-tried parishioners and friends, then not uninterested spectators, were not as I now see you. Then the active men, who took a leading part in the transactions of the day, you are now among the aged members of the society. I gaze again upon the fresh countenances of the children and youth, the hope of the congregation and of the young pastor: they have already taken their place, and become the pillars of the church. I stand once more in the midst of the venerable gray-haired men, who aided in the settlement of the first pastor, and

had come into the house of God to welcome the second: they are all gone, and a generation whom they did not know have come in their place. In imagination, I am once more surrounded by the troops of friends, young and old, who so kindly and cordially welcomed me to this field of untried and responsible duty. I again receive their greeting; I feel the grasp of their hand; I hear their voice; I see their smile of encouragement. But, alas! these twenty-five years I have been with you, death hath laid a heavy hand upon them. I look again. The grave doth not restore its dead; the dust lies undisturbed upon their bosom; there is no sound there but of the sighing wind as it passes by.

Nor are the associations and recollections of the hour mine alone. They are yours also, my Christian brethren and friends; for what has engrossed me through these long years has interested you. My thoughts have been suggested by your necessities; my pleasures have been connected with your satisfactions; my anxieties, with your perils and troubles. In the house of God, where we have so often met, and in your own homes, where your joys and sorrows have called us together, have been the events which have occupied me, and whose remembrance now presses upon the heart. These twenty-five years! You also have a share in the associations which the mention of them awakens. For, during this period, how many of

the eventful scenes of life have we passed together! How many changes have come over us since first we met, — changes in age and person, in fortune and condition, in family and neighborhood, in purpose and prospect! We have taken counsel together on affairs of town and parish; we have obeyed the same sabbath-bell, and mingled our prayers together; we have stood together at the marriage-festival, and when we have offered our children in baptism; we have sat together in the hour of religious joys, and broken and eaten of the bread of life; we have watched in the same chamber of sickness, — witnessed together the last struggles of the dying, and followed our dead in company to the place of their rest. When, then, the images of faded joys and hopes crowd upon the memory, when the buried recollections of these long years start up afresh, shall I doubt that the review of the period will have interest for you as well as myself? Let me, then, to-day speak of it. Let me ask you to accompany me, as I shall go back through this long vista, and revive our half-forgotten impressions, and gather up and preserve the events which we have shared together. That I may present a distinct picture, let me observe some order: I shall first dwell upon some of the circumstances which have rendered the ministry in this place one of difficulty and delicacy; then speak of the leading events which have taken place among us; and, finally, of our condition, pros-

pects, and duties. If I am able to complete the outline with any degree of fulness, it is all which I shall undertake.

Under the most favorable circumstances, the task of the young minister can never be easy. It cannot be other than a work of perpetual embarrassment and intense solicitude. Fresh from the schools, inexperienced, unacquainted with human nature, pressed with occupations, called on to counsel by the bed of the sick and dying, and required to speak forenoon and afternoon of each returning sabbath to the great congregation on subjects of the highest moment, his path is hedged around with difficulties; he treads a narrow way with precipices and pitfalls on either side. The lawyer and physician approach their duties only step by step, as skill and experience prepare them to discharge these duties; and not until years have passed away, and many trials, successes, and failures have followed, are they entrusted with cases of delicacy and difficulty. But the minister, the very day of his settlement, may be called on to perform any service, the hardest and most responsible of his profession. My first two sermons were devoted to a consideration of your duties and mine, as minister and people, of whose magnitude and extent I could have only the faintest conception; and my first funeral service was at the interment of a young man of my own age, a member of the University, the sorrow

for whose death, the prostration of many fond hopes, could be soothed only by the expression of the largest sympathy and the richest religious experience.

But this was not all. The condition of the religious world, at the period of my settlement, added to the embarrassments and labors of the young minister. It was at the close of the controversy between the two great portions of the Congregational Churches of New England, when the great community, hitherto driven and tossed by conflicting opinions, were now arranging themselves as their temperaments, tastes, associations, and convictions should lead them. A system of exclusion and denunciation then existed, of which those of the present generation can know almost nothing. Friends, who had taken sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company, parted by the way; and ministers, who had freely interchanged the services of the pulpit, retired from each other's association, and went on alone. The religious elements of society were in a loose, unsettled state; fears and suspicions had been infused into the heart of the community; and even opposition, having no clearly defined position, failed to inspire respect and win confidence. The liberal Christianity of those times, the growth of intelligence and freedom, the phasis of religion which the best minds in Christendom of every age have been led to adopt, was a manly protest against the narrowness and exclusiveness which would limit religious

inquiry, and proscribe honest opinions. Such a protest was then needed, and all honor to those who with faith and courage made it, and became the champions of freedom and Christian candor and an enlightened theology. They rescued the human intellect from the thraldom to which it was fast yielding, and gave an impulse to a rational Christianity which has been acknowledged far beyond the boundaries of New England, and invested all our institutions with a spirit of liberality which will be felt to the end of time. Never did a class of men undertake a work of reform from a purer motive, nor deserve more at the hands of those who should come after them, and enter into their labors. But the controversy, however beneficial in its final results, left a state of things which did not diminish, but added inconceivably to, the labors and anxieties of the young minister. There was no beaten track, no round of time-hallowed doctrines for him to follow; but there were new truths to be urged, newly aroused feelings to be guided, and tendencies to be guarded against, which would task all his powers. His position was like that of the civil fathers at the close of the Revolution. A spirit of liberty had been fostered, there were yearnings for a higher Christian life, and a deep-seated desire for a wider application of Christian truth; but liberty unqualified degenerates into licentiousness, and the awakened sensibility into a vague idealism, unless controlled by realities, and di-

rected into the channels of practical wisdom. It was a great thing then to meet the wants of the perplexed mind, and to prevent the soul, chilled by surrounding religious extravagance, from falling into religious indifference; and it required more than the wisdom of inexperienced youth to vindicate the truth, and guard against the extremes into which the reaction was hurrying a portion of the community. The trials of the religious character, through which the several churches of that day passed, have never been fully appreciated.

These trials fell to the ministry of this congregation in a limited measure. My venerable predecessor and colleague had already, from an early date of his ministry, taken his position. The Society was known as a Society of liberal Christians; their opinions and habits were settled, and they were not to be moved by every wind of doctrine, or every gale of religious excitement, how fiercely soever it might blow. Besides, there was little of the disposition in the ministry of the town to embarrass and misrepresent and proselyte, seen in most other places. The Old South Church was, at the period of my settlement, vacant. The minister of the Central Church, prostrated by long-continued illness, was about to retire from his duties and from the town; so that Dr. Going, of the First Baptist Church, was the only active pastor out of our own parish. He was earnest, efficient, and influ-

ential in his sphere, — labored in season and out of season to carry out his own ideal of truth and duty; but he was liberal and generous, and respected that freedom in others, which, like St. Paul, he would never yield to the importunities or threats of any, — no, not for an hour. He was a strong man, of strong convictions; but he ever regarded the honest opinions of others, and left them freely to follow their own convictions of duty. What I found Dr. Going when I came here, I have generally found ministers and people who have been added since to our numbers, and have occupied the several places of worship in the town and city. Personally, I have been on terms of friendly intercourse with the various clergymen, and with members of the various congregations. With many, not of my own parish, I have enjoyed a social and Christian sympathy, which have endeared them to me. They have asked me to be with them in their sicknesses, sorrows, and joys, so that I have come to think of myself rather as a minister of the city than of any particular portion of it. I can truly say, that, during all these long years, I have met with no want of courtesy; I have encountered no enmities; I have received no other than personal kindness and consideration. And yet I must add, that, during the early part of my ministry, such was the state of the public mind, such was the unsettled condition of our congregations, such their feverish anxiety, such their

watchful jealousy and want of mutual confidence, that the minister's labors and solicitudes were increased beyond expression. Though lightened by the steady composure, counsel, aid, and sympathy of the senior pastor, and the indulgence of the Society, they were years of unremitted toil.

Another circumstance added to the labors of the ministry in this place. The principal growth of the city has been within this period of a quarter of a century. When I came here, yours was a beautiful inland village of four thousand inhabitants. I well remember, and you who are familiar with those days will remember with me, its attractions, as it lay embosomed in the midst of our valley, having as yet climbed no one of the adjacent hills. It rises on my imagination now, as I first saw it from one of your eastern eminences on an early autumn morning. I vividly recall the spectacle, once so enchanting to the eye of travellers,—its clusters of white tasteful houses, reposing among the trees as yet in the robes of summer, and surrounded by the green fields and pastures where are now some of your busiest and most populous streets. We might adopt almost the fond language of the Jewish historian, who, speaking of the nation's idol, the wondrous temple of Jerusalem, describes it as resembling at a distance "a huge bank of snow" in the midst of a garden. About this period, the impulse began to be felt which has changed this

beautiful rural village into one of the largest and most thriving inland cities in the country. A growth so vigorous brought with it attendant perils and responsibilities; and a work was to be done here not unlike theirs, who clear the forests and lay out the great cities of the West, survey the highways which their children and their children's children are to travel, plant upon their margin the shade-trees under which they are to repose, and place the foundations of those institutions of learning and religion, in which they are to rejoice from generation to generation. Here, the cause of education, good morals, religion, and humanity was to be looked to, — a great work was to be done; and the burthen of this work fell upon the clergymen, who became the occupants of the four pulpits of the town. They took a leading part in the formation of the Lyceum and other associations, which have had such an influence upon our destinies. They have been behind no others in the care of the public schools, and in suggesting and carrying out those measures of reform through which they have reached their present condition of excellence, and become second to none in the Commonwealth. Let me, however, be just. The great impulse was given to our schools, and the system out of which the present one has grown was established as early as 1823; and never should the meed of praise be withheld from those devoted men: everlasting honor be paid them, who, at a period of great

depression and comparative neglect, conceived and established a plan which has proved so wise and efficient. But, to carry out and perfect this plan, to adapt it to the wants of a rapidly increasing population, — to adopt and incorporate into it the improvements of the day, so as to secure the best education of all, and do injustice to none, — required an amount of attention and labor which can be appreciated only by those who are familiar with such subjects. From the first, I enjoyed the great privilege of sharing in the direction of public education among us. Year after year I have been permitted to occupy a seat on the Board of the School Committee, both of the town and district; and, in more than one instance, have given to this cause alone the best portions of sixty days in a single year. I mention this, not to boast of the honor or to complain of the toil, but as an historical fact to be taken into the account, when we would comprehend the labors of a young clergyman in this place.

There is another consideration to be added. When I came here, there was no Society in the interior of New England comparable with this in weight of character and influence. The intellectual energy and Christian fidelity of my venerable predecessor had drawn around him an amount of intelligence and refinement not to be found out of our great cities. When, therefore, with such kind consideration you extended to me an unanimous invitation to become the asso-

ciate of your venerated pastor, while I could not be indifferent to the distinction and the privilege, I could not be unconscious of the weight of responsibility which the acceptance of your invitation would bring. Young in years and younger in experience, having preached only a few sabbaths, I cannot forget with what overpowering solicitude I entered upon the duties of my office. I knew what you had a right to expect, and I knew how poorly qualified any young man could be to meet that expectation. The standard of preaching was never higher than at that period. The almost inspired discourses of Buckminster, and the chaste and judicious sermons of Freeman and Thatcher, were on the shelves of your libraries. Channing was in your neighboring metropolis at the height of his reputation, pouring out a tide of rich thought far beyond the circle of his immediate hearers. You had been moved by the calm beauty and irresistible pathos of Greenwood. You had seen the apostolic simplicity and had felt the still, searching power of Ware. You had been nurtured by the grave wisdom which had so long adorned your own pulpit. Familiar with such models, I knew that here you would not tolerate indolence, nor be edified by common-place dulness. Comprising as you did so large a portion of the professional families of the town, I knew that the pulpit-services could not be sustained without careful preparation and untiring devotion; I knew what you had a right

to expect; but, feeble in health and fresh from the schools, I knew how little I had as yet to give. But I did not know how kindly you would accept the well-meant endeavor, nor how long and patiently you would bear with me. This I resolved on, that, as here my lot was cast, here, in all singleness and sincerity, I would consecrate my best energies to the duties of my profession. It became my ambition then, as it has been my aim since, to be an useful, improving, effective minister. I wished to do whatever good I might here, to become associated with this spot and identified with every great interest, every plan of improvement, with the social and religious life of this place; and from this object I resolved never to be diverted by any other ambition, by a desire for the reputation of profound scholarship or of elegant accomplishments, or to be widely known as the lecturer at Lyceums, or on some of the philanthropic topics of the day. I resolved not to be diverted from the especial work given me here to do, but to apply foremost and chiefly to its great and pressing duties, and to throw the whole weight of personal effort, character, and influence into the discharge of them. The plainest pulpit I ever deemed a throne of power, and the pastoral walks far above the common walks of life. With this feeling I began, and with this feeling, confirmed by the experience of a quarter of a century, I continue to this day; and, if the strength of the convic-

tion could be shown by the quantity of work done in these ways, I could state how many hundreds of sermons I have preached, and how many thousands of pastoral visits I have made. But I would rather say, resolving at the first to regard this as my home, I have given it the fresh and full affections which usually cluster around our earliest and latest home. Every object and every interest have become endeared by the association. It is the spot of my first love; and these beautiful hills seem to smile in friendly recognition, and these brooks to murmur the more sweetly, because I have heard them so long. Every old place has a history for the heart, and every new scene is regarded with affection, because it has grown up under my own eye. Each family seems bound to me by some peculiar tie; and the face of each child is dear, and I love to call it by name. Indeed, so exclusively did I regard my work here, so long and so intimately have we been associated, so closely have we been connected in my thought, that, for the well-being of each individual in the Society, — for the good name of the city and for the welfare of her children, however assuming it may be, I cannot altogether resist the feeling of personal responsibility. I have stood in my place among you so many years, and you have so grown up around me, — how can I fail to be reproved as the unwise and unfaithful steward, when you fall short in duty, or when our

favored city is false to her early promise, and holds back in the path of social and spiritual improvement?

I have dwelt upon some of the circumstances which have rendered the ministry in this place one of difficulty, delicacy, and responsibility. I come now to the leading events. I travel over again the way we have gone together. In doing this, I must confess that there is one thought that oppresses me. I have a feeling, that these events, scattered over the long passage of years, of which I am to speak, occurred but yesterday, and are familiar to yourselves as to me; so brief are the years when they are gone. But when I remember that I was preaching here before half of this congregation were born, and that many of you have come to dwell among us, strangers to our parish annals, — when I remember, above all, that of the one hundred and seventy heads of families whose names were on our register, thirty only are found with us this day, I am relieved of the apprehension that I am repeating an over-familiar tale. I am to recall events with which most of you have had as little personal acquaintance as with those before the flood.

This Society then, whose legal title is "The Second Parish in Worcester," was formed in March, 1785. It had existed just forty-two years when I was ordained. I have accordingly been with you more than one-third of the whole period of its existence. It

seemed to me a very old Society then; but it seems no longer so now. I was ordained, as I have said, in the first meeting-house of the parish, now the school-house, on Summer-street, and continued to preach there for nearly two years and a half. This edifice, endeared to the first generation by the associations of earlier days, and the memory of conflicts borne and victories achieved, could never be equally dear to the next. Soon after my settlement, the town, and with the town the parish, began to grow; and, in consequence of the inconvenient location of the old church, and the difficulty of procuring eligible pews, the necessity of building a larger one in a more central position began to be generally admitted; and, in the course of a few months, a site was procured, plans were selected, the corner-stone was laid, and, Aug. 20, 1829, the church was dedicated to Almighty God. The building of the new edifice was an important event in the history of the Society. It was more commodious, it occupied a more central and eligible spot, than the old one; and, little as it contained of architectural beauty, the aged men who were with us did not weep when they remembered the glory of the former house. With unmingled satisfaction we went up in company with friends earlier and later, with the dead and the living, to worship there. Year after year it stood, and afforded a refuge from the winter storm, and a shelter from the summer heat. We went in and came out;

we found it a pleasant religious home for ourselves and our children; it was associated with our deepest religious experience, and we learned to love even its deformities.

Thus the seasons passed over us. Every season brought with it additions to our numbers, and we became a large, hopeful, and flourishing parish. Pursuing the order of time, the next event to be noticed is the introduction of an organ into the church. This was Oct. 23, 1836. A small discordant instrument had been used in the old meetinghouse, but had never been introduced into the new one. At the time to which I refer, there were none in the city, where now there are eight every Sunday employed in the efficient aid of public worship. There are those who will readily recall the satisfaction with which they listened to the solemn, soothing, and inspiring tones of our own, as they first fell upon our ears and echoed along the ceiling. I here quote the closing reflections which were made from the pulpit on the day of its introduction: "It is a delightful reflection, that so are the generations of men linked, and so do the works outlive the lives of men, that one enters upon the labors of another. If God shall spare this house, and the instrument of worship which we have brought to it this day, our children and our children's children shall share in the benefits. And does it not give dignity and importance to our efforts, to remember that when

we shall have left these accommodations, they will arise to find in them a refuge from the heat and a shelter from the storm; and when the lips that now open in praise shall be silent, when that organ shall have sent forth its last dirge over all who aided in and witnessed its erection, there will it remain to assist in the devotions of other generations, inspire their worship, and animate their song?"

There is another event which I must record. After the introduction of the organ, I find a new impulse was given to the parish. The pews in the house were all occupied, the congregation was large, and a deeper religious spirit seemed awakened; numbers, greater than usual, were added to the church; and ample testimony is borne to the thoughtful kindness and Christian courtesy of its members, in a very beautiful and affectionate note of acknowledgment from the hand of the Senior Pastor, recorded in the Church Register. We stood in the tower of our strength, and no spot was on the sun of our prosperity. But a temporary cloud was gathering. The health of the Junior Pastor began to give way in midsummer: he was released from his labors, and returned from a journey of a few weeks no better. At the coming on of winter, he was charged by his physician to relinquish his home and his pulpit for a season, and seek the healing breezes of a tropical climate. And can he ever forget the prompt sympathy which you expressed, the unvarying kind-

ness which reached him far away, and the warm welcome which greeted his return? Painful as was the interruption, it was clearly ordered for good. A season of self-inspection was afforded him; he could look at his duties from a distance; a new field of reality was opened to his observation, and a new field of exercise for his imagination and memory. It was a crisis, — a turning point in his constitution; and at the end of a few months he was restored to his home and his duties with improved health, with a richer experience, and with a larger capacity to serve Him whose mysterious way he had followed, and to be useful to them with whom his lot in life is linked. And so we learn, —

> "The clouds we so much dread
> Are big with mercy, and shall break
> With blessings on our head."

In the summer of 1838, I resumed the services of the pulpit, — at first feebly; but each month was attended with new vigor, and the changing seasons brought the delightful assurance that a final cure had been effected. Once more in a home which was rendered doubly dear by our temporary absence, and the cordial kindness which welcomed our return, I entered with a new sense of enjoyment into the duties of my calling, and earnestly hoped to accomplish a greater work than ever. But an event was hastening which was to change materially our mutual relations. The

Senior Pastor of this Church had long lain ill: the snows and frosts of winter lingered late; and the chills of age had come on him, which no reviving breath of spring could dispel; and the worn frame was sinking away, which no warmth of summer could re-animate. Aug. 19, 1839, the event occurred which we all knew could not be much longer delayed: the light which shone so benignantly upon us was extinguished; the countenance that carried a benediction was changed; the trembling form that we loved to gaze upon disappeared from among us; the leading mind which animated it passed on before: my venerable associate, Rev. Dr. Bancroft, died.

"He went to his God; he went to his home,
No more amid peril and error to roam.
His eyes were no longer dim,
His feet no more did falter,
No grief could follow him,
No pang his cheek could alter."

We come to a new era in our history. I was now left sole Pastor of this Church. The responsibilities hitherto shared now rested upon one, and I felt as if I were beginning my ministry anew. For, although Dr. Bancroft preached but occasionally, and still more rarely performed any pastoral duty, yet was there a sense of protection in his presence, and a consciousness of safety in his counsels. When he was removed, we felt that a great cause was entrusted to our hands, and a common work, which, God helping

us, we must faithfully perform. But, for the performance of this work, he had not left us wholly unprepared. His own clear, comprehensive thought, his fearless independence, his unwavering fidelity to principle, his cheerful faith in an over-ruling Providence and the world to come; above all, his dying declarations of confidence, comfort, and solace in the truths which he had defended, were a legacy ever to be treasured, and stamped a character upon the Society never to be changed. Though unknown to many of you, his influence is yet seen in whatever calm reliance on great principles, respect for individual rights, love of peace, and ready sacrifice of individual preferences for the common good, may be witnessed among us. Years have passed; but most cordially do I adopt a sentiment inscribed on the records of your Church while he was living, "that he still watches over, guides, and instructs us, with the tenderness of a father and the solicitude of a Christian minister."

Hitherto you had gone along, a large, prosperous, and harmonious congregation, known for the liberality of your views and your love of peace. A time was coming which would test the sincerity of your professions and the strength of your principles. At various periods, the project had been discussed of forming a new Society by secessions from the old. Various reasons operated to advance the project. The prevailing one, I have no doubt, was a sincere conviction that such a step was

needed, and that the cause of liberal Christianity and enlightened devotion would thereby be promoted. The first separate meeting was held in February, 1845. It was a great event in the annals of our congregation. It was the sundering of ties which had been long continued and most intimate. They who had been reared in the bosom of the same Church, who had so long obeyed the same sabbath-bell, and mingled their devotions at the same altar, were henceforth to turn their faces asunder and worship apart. I know what the act must have cost many of you, — what rending of old associations, and what solicitudes for the uncertain future. And yet can I cease to admire the cheerfulness with which you coincided in a measure whose issues no one could foresee, but which, on the whole, seemed for good, and the hearty sympathy and co-operation with which you sought to bring it to a favorable conclusion? The measure proved a good one; the experiment was successful; and here was another Society, of one faith with ourselves, — a younger sister, — rearing her own altar, gathering together members of her own family, receiving your benedictions and heartiest good wishes. In a sermon preached the Sunday after the formation of the Society, in giving utterance to my own views and feelings, I am sure I also expressed yours. Looking back from this period of time, I have no occasion to alter a word. I said, "I foresaw from the beginning, that

this enterprise could not succeed without some sacrifice on the part of us all. But, if a great good is to be accomplished, that sacrifice we should willingly make; and, if we possess the spirit of our Divine Master, we shall make it without one murmur of complaint or one sigh of discontent. I foresaw that it would remove from our immediate communion some valued friends. Welcome faces we shall miss as we assemble to meditate and pray, and familiar greetings as we walk to the house of God in company, and the expressions of sympathy that added to our sabbath joys. But the strongest bonds that have united us will yet remain. Though standing at different altars, we have one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one Father of all. Though separated, and in different enclosures, we shall be together, constituting the same community of believers, touched by kindred affections, and devoted to the accomplishment of the same glorious objects. You stand apart, you form new associations in another place and around another preacher; but, let me assure you, to me you will ever be what you have been. These ties, which have been winding and welded around the heart by these eighteen years' intercourse, are not thus to be severed or loosened. I shall feel undiminished interest in your welfare. I shall claim my accustomed place at your firesides, and endeavor to win the regards of your children. I shall rejoice in your joy, and beg the privilege of a

spiritual friend in your sorrows. And last, not least, I will sympathize in this your undertaking; and, when you have obtained a new home for your religious affections, I will rejoice in every beam of success, every smile of prosperity that shall visit you. Most of all will I rejoice in the growing zeal and energy, in the higher life, and wider affections, and deeper peace, which you may obtain under new and more quickening influences. If this enterprise be of God, it will succeed; His blessing will crown it. To Him and to his grace we commend it."

A new Society was formed, a new house of worship erected, a new pastor settled; and we felt that we were not weakened, but that new strength was given to a cause dear to our hearts. A new laborer was introduced into one common field, new accommodations were made to supply the rapidly increasing wants of the city; a spirit of harmony existed between the two Societies unbroken; we had discharged a great duty, and we were at peace. But a new trial awaited us. On the evening of August 24, 1849, you were called from your homes to witness the entire destruction of your house by fire. However you may regard it now, you saw it then with other feelings than those of indifference. There were associations connected with that house which forbade that you should be unmoved. The vicissitudes of twenty years, since we had first entered it for worship, had endeared it to

your hearts. Every part had become the record of a history. The very doors had opened invitingly to you, the very walls were written over with precious memories. The vane that swung above the dome, how often had it discoursed to you of the aspects of the skies, perhaps of the world beyond! the dial-plate upon the tower, how often had it measured out to you the hours of business and of pleasure! and the bell, how often had it broken the silence of the night, and reminded you of the passage of time! how often had you heard and obeyed its call on still sabbath mornings! and when it tolled once more, as it went down upon the pavement in fragments, as I reminded you when we first met again, it seemed a fitting knell over pains and pleasures long gone by. There was the record of your religious experience, — of the doubts, hopes, fears, and passionate desires of childhood and youth; of the inward strugglings, the calm resolves, the settled faith, the peace passing understanding, of maturer years. And there were the memories of God's varied discipline, the memories of the loved and lost with whom you had walked by the way, and by whose side you had sat in the sanctuary, — kindred near and distant, friends earlier and later.

You looked upon the charred and blackened ruins of your familiar temple, but with no word of complaint, and no tone of despondency. It was an occasion rather of gratitude for the expressions of kindness

and sympathy which it called forth, and for the energy and devotion which it revealed in yourselves. The Church of the Unity and the First Baptist Church, with prompt courtesy, made us the proffer of their house at such hours as should be most convenient for ourselves. But, while we were grateful, we preferred to spare our friends the inconvenience to which our acceptance of their kindness would have subjected them. We sought an unaccustomed place of worship. But I need not go on longer with the history. The events are too recent, and they are too fresh in your recollection, to require a remembrance here and now. A trial of your faith and affection, a test of your attachment to this ancient Society, was made; and you may forget with what cheerfulness and fidelity and devotion you sustained it all, and passed in safety the wilderness which now lay before you; but I can never cease to remember the ready acquiescence with which you submitted to the loss of your place of worship, the energy and good hope with which you set about the building anew of your broken walls, the patience and perseverance with which you encountered many and great discomforts, the unanimity with which all your plans for the erection of a new house were laid, and the unbroken fellowship and affection with which they were brought to a successful conclusion. You may forget those lingering, tedious months, the most trying in our annals; but I

can never cease to remember, and thank God for them as among our best and happiest, — for they proved your constancy, and inspired a confidence and imparted a satisfaction which never could have been enjoyed through long years of prosperity. You may forget — no, you can never cease to remember, with heartfelt gratitude to the Giver of all Good, who had guided you through all your perils and wanderings — the emotions of pleasure, the religious joy, with which one year ago you for the first time seated yourselves within this beautiful edifice, and felt that you once more had a religious sanctuary, an altar of refuge, a sabbath home. Long may it stand, the monument of your liberality and of your Christian attachments; and, when you go out of it to enter it no more, may your successors in long procession, the advancing generations, find it the house of God and the gate of heaven!

I have now mentioned the leading events of our history. I have now followed step by step the way we have gone over together. But there are other things to be noticed, which have occupied much of my thought and some of yours, and should not be passed by in silence. Among these, I first mention our Sabbath School. When I came here, and for nearly two years after my ordination, there was no organization for the instruction of the children. Whatever religious education they then received was principally

obtained at home, with an occasional examination perhaps once or twice in the year, conducted in public by the Pastor. Sabbath-schools were then a novelty, regarded with some degree of jealousy, and had not as yet superseded the old ways of catechizing practised in most of our congregations. But, about the time we entered the second church, ours was formed; with some hesitancy at first, but continued with increasing confidence as we went on. Whatever misgivings some might have had in the beginning, they readily yielded to what was regarded as a general impression of its utility. I know you now look upon it with affection, and will not cease to foster it as a school of religious wisdom, and the hope of the Church. I have always endeavored to maintain a personal connection with it, and here desire to express my heartfelt obligation to the large body of superintendents and teachers who have season after season been connected with it, — some of them from the moment of its formation. The number of pupils who have been members of it, and who have gone from it during these twenty-five years, we do not know. The school has now connected with it, including teachers, pupils, and Bible-class, are more than two hundred. And I may state as a fact, showing your interest in the training of your children, that there have been sent from it, and from the bosom of this Church, since my connection with you, to complete their education in

some of our principal New England Colleges, the large number of twenty-five young men. Sixteen have graduated; two have been removed by friends, two by death; and six are now members of our neighboring University. And, to show you that the Sunday-school has not been without its influence, I may add, that four at least of these have become useful and effective ministers, some of them already eminent in their profession. May the day be distant when its influence shall be less!

I mention, as another means of good, the very excellent Parish Library, for the use of all the habitual attendants on our worship. With the exception of the clock, which measures out our time; and the tablets, which keep before the eyes of the congregation God's great commandments and Christ's inimitable prayer, — the gift of a living member of the Society, whose presence forbids a more explicit acknowledgment; and of a chandelier, the legacy of the late Mr. Maccarty, involved in the ruin of our former house, — this Library, and a valuable portion of our communion-plate, deserve to be noticed as the only bequest which this Society has received since my connection with it. They were the dying gift of one to whom its prosperity was very dear, and who, through the books which he enables us to purchase, though dead, speaks to us from generation to generation. I refer to the late Edward D. Bangs, for many years Secretary of

the Commonwealth, the founder of the Bangs Library. I take particular pleasure in noticing such acts of liberality, because, while they were so frequent in our churches once, they have become among us so rare now. God forbid that any should be so unwise as to endow us with a fund sufficiently large to take away the necessity of individual effort! Such a fund has, in more instances than one, proved all but fatal to the prosperity of a Society. But can any thing be more natural and becoming in those who are blest with the means, than to testify their sense of obligation by tokens of remembrance to the Church, in the bosom of which they were educated? It is an enduring expression of sympathy, and makes certain a remembrance when and where we would love most to be remembered, — in the place and the hallowed hour of prayer. The more these memorials we can multiply, the more we insure the sacredness and permanency of our religious institutions.

I mention, as other helpers in the great work to be done in a religious Society, the various associations which have been formed from time to time for benevolent, social, and religious purposes. Among them all I know of none which has been more useful than that which has been so actively maintained by the females of the congregation. By their monthly meetings, by their combined labors in behalf of others, by their mutual acquaintance and interest in each other and

in common objects, they do much, let me assure them, to relieve the loneliness of strangers who have come to reside among us, and cement the members of the Society together. It is good for us to meet oftener and to know each other better than we do; and, when you shall have provided a suitable place where I can approach you more nearly and address you more familiarly than I can from this pulpit, I have not a shadow of doubt that new life and strength will be given to the congregation.

But, as an expression of religious sympathy and an aid to religious improvement, we must rely more than we do, more than any of our congregations have done, on the ordinances which Christ appointed. Alas for us, when they shall sink into neglect! What would our homes be but for the associations and memories connected with them? — the tokens of affection in childhood, and the expressions of endearment in maturer years? With these, the Swiss will love his bleak barren mountains, the Laplander will love his fields and his hills of ice, better than all the plains and gardens of the fertile South. So religion has its memories, its emblems and tokens of affection, and, through these, becomes dearer to the heart than it could by any amount of mere intellectual manifestation. It is more through the influence of these ordinances than any excellence of preaching, our religious Societies are strengthened and perpetuated. For, let our

churches be divested of their Christian associations, let the minister become the mere lecturer, and he may write like Burke, he may speak like Tully; but, let me tell him, he cannot keep his congregation together a single year. The feeblest servant of Christ that kneels in simple devotion at the altar, and with a tender thoughtfulness breaks the consecrated bread, is more efficient than he. I am glad, therefore, to find that you do not fancy that you have outgrown what Christ reverenced; that there is a degree of respect for the time-hallowed ordinances of his religion. Since I have been with you, I have administered two hundred and eighty-four baptisms, and I have admitted nearly two hundred persons — sixteen during the last year — to the Church. And yet why should there be so few? The rite of remembrance — most beautiful, expressive, and touching it is; and tender associations are connected with it. In the Protestant Churches of Europe there are none of the feelings of awe and strangeness which are connected with it here. The young, after a careful preparation in the Sunday-school and under the eye of the pastor, pass to the fellowship and watch of the Church as the usual thing; and their first communion is not an occasion of awful dread, but a festival of rejoicing, to which the kind wishes and tender assiduities of friends are invited, participated in with glad hope, and remembered with pleasure. When will we learn,

that a tender reverence for a great and pure being, — the consecration of the heart and life to one great and noble object, — will do more than all else to guard the avenues of temptation, to quicken the sluggish affections, to prop the inward principle, and conduct to the very heights of manly virtue, dignity, and enjoyment.

There are other religious services than those that I have named which we have shared together. We have been invited to sit on sixty councils; called to assist in the ordination of clergymen in this and neighboring States; and have been present by the pastor and a delegate, and taken a part in most of them. I have united four hundred and twenty-eight persons in marriage, and have often passed from the marriage festival to the funeral solemnity, and so again from the funeral solemnity to the marriage festival, within the hour. On one side of the street I have joined in the joyous festivities of your children, and then crossed over to attend in the chamber of your dying; I have gone from the room of the sick, where the dim night-taper was burning, to the brilliantly lighted hall, where the youthful and healthful were gathered. So varied, and made up of such contrasts, is the life of the clergyman; and yet, if that life is real and earnest, each scene has its lessons and its memory for the heart.

I said in the beginning, that, of the one hun-

dred and seventy names written when I came here in your parish-books, among the two hundred and fifty now registered, I find only thirty; and, if we add those on the list of our sister Society, only thirty-eight. I did not think there were so few, nor did I realize that you had so changed. How many have come and gone! — once fellow-worshippers here, now apart in every clime, on every continent and island of the sea. I have made some inquiry. I perceive they are found in England, France, Italy, and Holland; in China and Central America; in the East and West Indies, and islands of the Pacific; and I believe there is not a State or principal city of the Union which has not a representative from our religious Society, bearing the character which he here formed, — the impress of our fidelity or neglect, — himself the centre of other circles, scattering the seeds of the good or evil which we here planted in his bosom. It is this consideration which adds unspeakable value to our religious associations, and imparts unutterable solemnity to the work which we have to do. Strike upon the ocean, our philosophy teaches, and the impulse, wave succeeding wave, reaches to the most distant shores. Who shall measure the duration or extent of a pure thought, or a right principle, or a virtuous impulse, which we may communicate to any one soul, enclosed on any one sabbath within these walls?

But there are other causes for the changes in this Society than that which I have mentioned. During these twenty-five years, I have attended four hundred and twenty-nine funerals. A company has gone out from us, which, if it could be gathered here to-day, would amaze you by its magnitude. The small and the great would be here, — the infant of a day, young men and maidens, the middle-aged, and they who were bending under the burthens of nearly a century of years. But I come to the house of God; I look for them, — the kind friends who welcomed me here twenty-five years ago, and those other friends who, in different stages of our journey, joined their company; and, except a remnant, they are not here. I go along the streets which they familiarly trod; I pause at the doors which they used to throw so invitingly open; I enter the dwellings which they adorned with kindness and generous hospitality, and they are not there. I go to your beautiful cemetery, where, fourteen years ago, we saw the first sleeper borne and laid in the virgin soil. I stood there the other day, — the calmest and serenest, the very bridal of the month. The bosom of the earth was disrobed of its wintry covering, the air teemed with friendly suggestions, and the winds blew softly as if from angels' wings through the naked branches of the trees; and, as I gazed on the little mounds and the white monuments around, how could I fail to be profoundly

affected? The years rolled back, and I seemed once more to be in the midst of familiar friends, to gaze on faces again that we loved, and to hear tones that made our bosoms thrill with joy.

> "The forms of the departed,
> The beloved and true-hearted,
> Came to visit me once more."

They are your dead, your friends and mine, earlier and later, removed from us during the long passage of years; but, in our better moments, when the soul breaks away from the thraldom of the senses and communes with the distant and the unseen, living again in our hearts as tender and loving and more dear than ever.

I have spoken of the changes which have been wrought in the congregation. The floods of time have swept over; and old things, old faces, old friendships, have passed away. But still more striking has been the change in the ministry; it would seem as if all things here had become new. I ask for my contemporaries, and the answer comes back that I am more than eleven years the senior clergyman of this city; the pastors of our older churches have come and gone again and again, while I have stood in my lot. I look around on our large and populous county, and again I am reminded of the revolutions of a quarter of a century. Of the one hundred and seventy-seven ministers of all denominations who oc-

cupy its various pulpits, I can call to mind only seven who have remained pastors of the same churches, and only four who retain the sole charge of their flock. I may almost take upon my lips the language of my venerable colleague in his half-century sermon, to which we listened thirteen years ago, so affecting in the utterance, "I am now the oldest clergyman in the county. I have outlived my generation, and in the midst of society may be considered as a solitary man."

These twenty-five years — they have passed swiftly and smoothly away. We have reached a principal stage of our journey; and now, as I look back upon the road we have travelled together, while the feebleness of my endeavors and the imperfection of my services cannot fail to inspire unaffected humility, yet does the retrospect bring with it cheerful and pleasant memories. It reminds me of labors willingly borne, because so abundantly rewarded; of sorrows lightly falling, because sustained by your sympathy; of friendships unbroken, and a cordial intercourse from the beginning, chilled by no seasons of coldness, interrupted by no moment of alienation to the present hour. No man could be more blessed in the pastoral relation, and a long one, — no small fragment of a long life, have we passed together. For your kindnesses, friends and parishioners, so early begun, so long continued, and so variously manifested to me and mine, let me pour out my heart's gratitude. My right

hand will have forgot its cunning, my dotage will have come, my death will be near, when I cease to remember them.

These twenty-five years of mingled life that we have passed together, they are gone, — the morning and the midnoon of our brief summer's day; and what permanent memorial have they left behind? What is the response in our own bosoms? What hath the recording angel borne up, and written in the book of life? What have these years, now numbered and gone, done for us? and what have we done for the cause of Christ and humanity? Something, I know; else why have we stood here so long, and not had our vineyard taken from us, and given to more faithful husbandmen? Something, I know, these years have done for us; for they have told us how insecure are our best privileges, and how the objects most familiar and dear hasten away, and the vision of life vanishes even while we gaze; and something, I trust, we have done for the cause of truth and goodness, to build up in our hearts and in the midst of us the kingdom of God. But, brethren, when in an hour like this we stand at the close of a quarter of a century; when the voices of the past speak to us of the fleetness and solemnity of our time; when the memory of opportunities neglected and seasons misimproved revives, and the faces of the great company who once sat with us, sharers of our devotions, but now gone to their

account, bearing the stamp of our fidelity or neglect, seem looking down upon us, the words of mere congratulation die upon the lips; we are checked in the indulgence of self-satisfaction; the little we have done passes from our recollection, and we feel it to be a moment for serious self-inspection, earnest prayer, and solemn resolutions. Seeing, then, that the months and the years hurry by, let us not now pause, but hasten in our work; and, what our hands find to do, do with our might. Knowing that the day of our deliverance and recompense is nearer than it was, let us pledge ourselves to renewed fidelity, and go on with cheerfulness and good hope our appointed path. The welfare of this ancient and honored Society, the cause of God and man, of truth and humanity in this place, is committed to our keeping. Instructed by the experience of these twenty-five years, let us arise and put on the beautiful garments, and witness a good confession, and show, by our untiring activity and disinterested love, that we know the truth and feel its power. Let us go on with unfaltering faith and devotion, struggling ever and striving upward, until the shadows of our night shall descend and our labors shall be over. And then, having sung our evening hymn of praise, may we go to our rest, — enter that world where there is no beginning of days or end of years; where we may join that assembly which no man can number, the small and the great, the saints

of all ages, the good of all climes, — the excellent of whom we have heard, and the meek and trusting whom we have loved, — from whom we shall be parted no more for ever. The Lord bless and cause the light of his countenance to shine upon you! His presence ever be a wall of fire round about you, and a glory in the midst of you!

NOTES.

Note, p. 21.

The history of the Hymn-books used by the congregation is not a long one, and may as well here be written. It would seem, that, when the Society was formed, those who seceded from the First Church brought with them the Hymn-book from which they had been accustomed to sing. This was the New Version of the Psalms of David by Tate and Brady, then in common use in the New England churches. This continued in the congregation until 1796, when the more varied and complete collection of Belknap was adopted. This was a decided advance on the former, and obtained a pretty general adoption in the more liberal churches. It maintained its place in our own for about thirty years. But in 1825 it yielded to another, a more modern and a far superior compilation. This was the collection of Psalms and Hymns prepared by Edmund Q. Sewall of New York. It was an excellent work in its day, compiled with judgment and taste, but deficient in hymns expressive of a deeper religious experience. The present collection, selected by members of the Cheshire Association, was introduced May 9, 1847. A faithful history of New England Hymn-books, from Ainsworth's and the New England Version down through their successive generations to the last published, would be very rich and instructive.

Note, p. 32.

If I were to designate a single object which deserves the attention of those who wish to do something for the permanent good of our parishes, it would be the making of some provision for the

establishment of a Ministerial Library, so endowed as to afford an annual income for the purchase of such critical and professional books as may be needed from year to year. I know of nothing that would more surely secure the intellectual and spiritual growth of a Society. Here stands the case. A library, suited to the daily wants of the minister, — without which, he is embarrassed on every question, and hindered in every step of his intellectual progress, — cannot be procured at a cost less than fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars, a sum which few can command earlier or later. Consequently, unless he resides in a large city, or in the neighborhood of the University, where are large public libraries, he is kept back in his intellectual career, is narrowed down and dwarfed, and can never furnish that fresh and vigorous thought which comes from intercourse with the best minds of all ages and climes. Now, suppose there were a fund invested sufficient to yield annually the moderate sum of one hundred dollars, who cannot see what a valuable library would be accumulated during a single ministry of half a century? The parish that possessed such a rich treasure would be most attractive to the young candidate; and, whenever vacancies should occur, could easily secure the services of young men of talent, and would essentially aid them in the formation of the highest intellectual and spiritual character. Some of the most illustrious of the English clergy have lived and died in remote country villages; but, having access to some old baronial or parochial library, they have done good service to the cause of learning and religion, and been among the shining lights of the Church.

In order to save trouble to the annalist of the Parish a hundred years hence, I hasten to correct a slight error which crept into the notes to the Sermon which was preached at the dedication of the new house. The bequest of Nathaniel Maccarty, Esq., was of the chandelier which was destroyed with the old house. The clock and tablets were the gift of Mr. Samuel B. Scott.

I take pleasure in adding, that, since the delivery of this Anniversary Discourse, a donation of forty volumes of valuable religious works has been made to the Bangs Library from the rich collection and by the widow of the late Dr. John Park, so lately passed away, — *Felix, non vitæ tantum claritate, sed etiam opportunitate mortis.*

Chas. Boyer

THE MINISTER AND PARISH:

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ORDINATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE MEMBERS OF THE

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY IN WORCESTER,

MARCH 28, 1852.

BY ALONZO HILL.

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